

American

NEWS & VIEWS

A Daily Newsletter from Public Affairs, American Embassy

August 27, 2010

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|--|---|
| Secretary Clinton: Rape of Congolese Civilians was "Horrific Attack" | 1 |
| U.S. Program Boosts Global Law Enforcement Capacity..... | 2 |
| Muslim-American Scholars Launch Islamic College in California..... | 3 |

Secretary Clinton: Rape of Congolese Civilians was "Horrific Attack"

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — Reports that between 150 and 200 women and children were raped by rebel forces in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) prompted pledges by Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton that the United States will do everything it can to work with the United Nations and DRC officials to hold the perpetrators responsible and create a safe environment for all civilians living in eastern Congo.

According to press reports, hundreds of soldiers from the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) and elements of the Mai Mai local militia took over Luvungi and surrounding villages between July 30 and August 4 and brutally raped women and baby boys before looting the areas and withdrawing.

"This horrific attack is yet another example of how sexual violence undermines efforts to achieve and maintain stability in areas torn by conflict but striving for peace," Clinton said in an August 25 statement.

"The United States has repeatedly condemned the epidemic of sexual violence in conflict zones around the world, and we will continue to speak out on this issue for those who cannot speak for themselves," she said.

Along with causing immediate harm to victims, sexual violence "denies and destroys our common dignity, it shreds the fabric that weaves us together as humans, it endangers families and communities, it erodes social and political stability, and it undermines economic progress," Clinton said. "These travesties, committed with impunity against innocent civilians who play no role in armed conflict, hold us all back."

The secretary presided over the September 20, 2009, passage of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1888, which underscores the importance of preventing and responding to sexual violence used as a tactic of war. In the wake of the latest incident, Clinton urged the international community to "build on this action with specific steps to protect local populations against sexual and gender-based violence and bring to justice those who commit such atrocities."

More than 5 million people have died during fighting in the DRC dating back to the mid-1990s, and the conflict remains one of the longest-running — and deadliest — in sub-Saharan Africa. Nearly 5,000 rapes were reported in the Kivu region in 2009, although the actual number is believed to be much higher, according to news reports.

The soldiers of the chronically undertrained and unpaid Congolese military are often accused of being the worst perpetrators of systematic rape, while high-ranking Congolese government officials and members of the United Nations' peacekeeping force in the DRC also have been accused.

The International Criminal Court has begun legal proceedings against former DRC rebel leaders Germain Katanga and Mathieu Ngudjolo Chui, as well as former DRC Vice President Jean-Pierre Bemba. All three are accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including rape.

During her visit to Goma in August 2009, Clinton announced that the United States is providing \$17 million to help survivors of rape and prevent sexual violence in the eastern DRC.

The funding is being used to provide medical care, counseling, economic assistance and legal support to 10,000 women in areas including North and South Kivu. Part of the money is also being spent to train health care workers in the complex surgical procedures needed by survivors of rape, such as fistula repair.

Condemning the rapes in the Luvungi area as "another grave example of both the level of sexual violence and the insecurity that continue to plague the DRC," U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon sent Assistant Secretary-General Atul Khare, the officer-in-charge of the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations, to the country, and told U.N. Special Representative for Sexual Violence in Conflict Margot Wallstrom to take charge of the U.N.'s response and follow-up to this incident, according to an August 24 statement by Ban's spokesman, Martin Nesirky.

According to Nesirky, peacekeepers at the U.N. Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) North Kivu office did not receive reports of the attack until August 12.

"It's unfortunately common for incidents to go unreported, for the simple stark fact that people fear reprisals," he said. He added that although the peacekeepers do regular patrols, they cover a large area and their force is limited in number.

Nesirky also read a statement by Special Representative Wallstrom, who described the rape rampage as "a very extreme case in terms of its scale and the level of organization of the attacks," and said the perpetrators "must be brought to justice."

"This terrible incident confirms my general findings during my recent visit to the DRC of the widespread and

systematic nature of rape and other human rights violations,” Wallstrom said, and the DRC “remains one of the grave situations of concern that requires priority attention and response of the international community.”

U.S. Program Boosts Global Law Enforcement Capacity

Long-term programs getting results in Indonesia, Thailand, Philippines

By Jane Morse
Staff Writer

Washington — With more than 7,000 islands and 35,400 kilometers (22,000 miles) of coastline, guarding Philippine waters is a monumental job for law enforcement.

That job just got a little easier with the U.S. donation of four police patrol boats to the Philippine National Police Maritime Group’s Special Boat Unit.

At the boat donation ceremony August 16, U.S. Ambassador to the Philippines Harry K. Thomas Jr. said the donation — which will soon be followed by two more patrol boats — will help Philippines police protect the country against terrorism, smuggling, transnational crime and human trafficking, and also aid in rescues at sea.

“Policing the maritime environment is vital not only for domestic security, but regional and even global security,” Thomas said. “A strong and sustained maritime policing capability will safeguard the security of all.”

Funding for the patrol boats came from the U.S. State Department’s Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs. But that assistance is implemented by the International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP) of the U.S. Justice Department.

ICITAP was created in 1986 to work with foreign governments to develop professional law enforcement capacity that protects human rights, combats corruption and reduces the threat of transnational crime and terrorism. Working within a framework of the U.S. government’s foreign assistance strategy, ICITAP supports U.S. foreign policy and national security objectives.

U.S. government agencies that fund ICITAP programs include the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) and the departments of State and Defense. ICITAP trainers include agents from the Justice Department, the FBI, and the Treasury Department’s Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

OUTREACH IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

Of the 38 countries where ICITAP currently is training, three are in the Asia-Pacific region: Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines.

“Every country is different,” said ICITAP’s assistant director in charge of programs in Asia, Africa and the Middle East. “These three countries have their own very unique challenges, but they also have a lot of common concerns. Transnational crime, counterterrorism — those are major considerations for that part of the world.”

Training in the region focuses on building fundamental skills, such as how to conduct investigations, the proper way to collect evidence and nonviolent methods for controlling civil disturbances, according to the assistant director. A former U.S. police officer himself, he declined to have his name used in this article.

ICITAP’s law enforcement training is part of a long-term development program for each country. For example, ICITAP has led the Police Assistance Program for the Indonesian national police since it separated itself from the Indonesian armed forces in 2000.

“There are approximately 380,000 police in Indonesia, so you’re dealing with a very, very large police force,” said the ICITAP assistant director. “If you’re going to accomplish organizational change, it takes a long time.”

Starting at the most basic level with the fledgling police force, ICITAP has trained Indonesian police to meet progressively more complex and demanding challenges, such as cybercrime, forensic and DNA analysis, maritime security and trafficking in humans and wildlife. The progress of the Indonesian police force, which is spread across Indonesia’s 17,000 islands, is “absolutely astounding,” according to the U.S. official.

In Thailand, ICITAP conducts programs focusing on community policing, the U.S. official said. Crime-scene management, criminal investigation, crisis management, crowd control, instructor development and institutional development assistance are among the many areas of training provided by ICITAP to the Royal Thai Police.

In the Philippines, ICITAP has helped the Philippine National Police (PNP) accomplish top-to-bottom structural reforms. Among the ICITAP programs there is the “model police station,” designed to correct operational deficiencies in some 27 local police stations across the country. The goal, the U.S. official said, is to have all station-level personnel competent in contemporary law enforcement topics and to establish standard operating procedures.

The Philippines' 200,000-strong police force also must address the challenges of terrorism and transnational crime. ICITAP is helping it develop the necessary skills.

The PNP and the Philippine military have developed good cooperation in raiding terrorist camps in the most dangerous areas of the country, the U.S. official said, with the PNP taking the lead in collecting and managing evidence. In one such raid, the assistant director said, PNP officers used their ICITAP training to collect evidence that identified two members of Abu Sayyaf, a violent Islamic separatist group operating in the southern Philippines. Two Abu Sayyaf members killed in that raid were on the FBI's "10 Most Wanted" terrorist list.

Success in the PNP is "self-perpetuating," the U.S. official said. "Once they sit through the [ICITAP] classes, they realize the potential that they have — they just have to be given the keys to unlock it."

Muslim-American Scholars Launch Islamic College in California

Zaytuna College plans to educate generations of Muslim-American leaders

By M. Scott Bortot
Staff Writer

Washington — The long history of Islamic scholarship has just gotten a novel addition: a college in California that seeks to educate Muslim leaders.

Zaytuna College held its inaugural classes August 24 and aims to become America's first four-year, accredited, Islamic institution of higher learning.

Founded by three Muslim-American scholars, Zaytuna focuses on renewing Islam's intellectual tradition while placing it in the context of American society.

"As the years pass, the founding of Zaytuna College will prove to be a milestone in bringing about both a sounder understanding of Islam and better relations between Muslims and members of other faith communities here in the United States — God willing," founder Zaid Shakir said in a news release marking the college's opening.

Dustin Craun, a student from Colorado in Zaytuna's first class, said the college will help Muslims navigate their role in the United States.

"I think that we, as Muslims in America, have to figure out how to learn what Islam is for us as Americans, and that is part of what this institution is about," Craun said. The college is "about being standard-bearers for the Muslims in this country."

Craun and the 14 other students in Zaytuna's initial class can choose from two majors: Islamic law and theology or Arabic. The school's founders expect some of them to become leaders of their communities as imams or in other capacities. Omid Safi, a professor of Islamic studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, said that would be an important achievement because some foreign-born imams do not understand American culture and society.

"Importing works great for carpets. It doesn't work particularly great for imams in an American context, where they might need to know just as much about marital counseling," Safi said. Future Muslim religious leaders in America "are going to have to be completely up on the world of Facebook and [teenage singer] Justin Bieber, just as they are on the classical aspects of Islamic law."

Other U.S. colleges offer courses in Islamic studies, but Hatem Bazian, the academic affairs chair and a co-founder of Zaytuna, said the fledgling college takes another approach.

"At institutions that teach about Islam, it is teaching from the outside looking in, and often it is from a deconstructing approach," Bazian said. "We will be looking at Islam from within and with a sense of not to seek to deconstruct, but how to take that valuable core of the tradition and build upon it."

Other Americans have tried to launch Islamic colleges, in Chicago and New York. Zaytuna College might have an advantage in that its leadership is affiliated with well-established academic institutions. Bazian is an adjunct professor of religious studies at St. Mary's College of California, and co-founder Hamza Yusuf sits on the board of advisers for the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California.

Plans for Zaytuna include a campus of its own, but for now its home is at the Graduate Theological Union, where it rents classroom space from the American Baptist Seminary of the West. James Donahue, president of the Graduate Theological Union, said Zaytuna promises to become a bridge for understanding between Muslims and non-Muslims in America.

Bazian also envisions a role for Zaytuna as a bridge between the United States and predominantly Muslim countries through exchanges with academic institutions from across the global Muslim community.

"I think there is for the Muslim world now an intellectual address in America where they could feel that they could engage with this institution in conferences, in symposia, in exchanges that could take place," he said. He added

that Islamic scholars in other countries have already expressed their interest.

Zaytuna is the fruit of more than a decade of efforts to promote Islamic scholarship in America. It grew out of the Zaytuna Institute, which Yusuf founded in 1996. Beginning in 2004, Shakir led a seminary program at the institute to test the viability of a college, and the institute's Arabic summer program has grown substantially over the past few years.

Application and enrollment procedures at Zaytuna mirror those of other American colleges. Admission decisions take into consideration grade-point averages, standardized tests and essays. Entering students must have a basic level of proficiency in Arabic, the equivalent of one year of university-level study.

Enrollment is open to people of all faiths.

"The first universities that were established in the Muslim world, at that time they were open to all, and our principle is that knowledge belongs to all of humanity," Bazian said.

Faculty positions at the college are fully staffed with both men and women. Zaytuna administrators will be drafting job descriptions as more teaching needs arise.

"Our job description would actually seek not only an individual who is skilled in their particular field, but who has awareness and an understanding of the Islamic intellectual contribution," Bazian said.

Bazian said Zaytuna has substantial challenges ahead. Among them is accreditation, essential for college degrees to be officially recognized in the United States. He said he is confident Zaytuna will receive accreditation, but the process could take four to eight years.

"We feel that it is very critical for an institution like ours, founded in the United States, to have the respect and the recognition of other institutions of higher learning, for us to be accredited," Bazian said.

Zaytuna, like well-established colleges, faces financial hurdles. Once it begins to expand, financing will become more critical.

"Our goal is to have a permanent site, and that is contingent on the financial resources and our fundraising projects and programs," Bazian said. "We are hopeful and positive that the Muslim-American community is forthcoming and will see this as their most important strategic step in strengthening their community institutional framework."

The college's initial endowment stands at \$30 million for the next four years while it seeks additional endowments for several chairs in Islamic and Arabic studies. Also, Zaytuna aims to raise another \$3 million to \$4 million to cover operational expenses.

Bazian has a timeline in mind for Zaytuna. It would have its own permanent home in five to seven years and an enrollment of as many as 500 students in 10 years. As the student body grows, so would the academic offerings, with new majors and a strong research unit.

College administrators expect to offer more courses on Islamic jurisprudence and add studies of Shiite Islam.

Zaytuna might even compete with other colleges and universities on an entirely different level.

"I don't know yet if we will be able to get a football team, but I think a basketball team will be easily manageable in a short period of time," Bazian said.

For Craun, Zaytuna represents another chapter in America's rich cultural and spiritual heritage.

"These types of projects, in my opinion, deepen what is beautiful about this country in terms of its diversity, in terms of its acceptance and in terms of what we would hope would be a deep level of tolerance," he said. "It can bring another level of thought, another perspective, and another tradition to the myriad of opinions and understandings of reality that exist in this country."

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